

Protest and Criticism Greet Rogers in Tunisia

STATINTL

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TUNIS, Feb. 10—Secretary of State William P. Rogers was greeted today by caustic criticism of America's Middle East policy and by unusual student demonstrations when he arrived in Tunisia, a good friend of the United States and one of the most moderate of the Arab nations.

Prime Minister Bahi Ladgham, the heir apparent to rule Tunisia, said he told Rogers that it would be adding "insult to injury" if the United States gave further arms to Israel.

Ladgham told reporters he informed Rogers in their talks today that Tunisia's position on the Middle East is:

"At the very moment when Israel has the advantage on the ground and military supremacy, particularly in the air, any additional shipment of arms, or promise of arms, constitutes a sort of provocation" that could inflame the crisis.

Ladgham said this would amount to a new "wound inflicted on the Arabs, and perhaps an encouragement to Israel's aggressive policy and its refusal to accept any compromise solution, perhaps leading it to step up its air raids" against its Arab neighbors.

While these American-Tunisian exchanges were taking place, police riot squads and army troops armed with machine guns, tear-gas grenades and armored cars with water sprays ringed the American embassy, the United States Information Services library, Tunisian government offices and the University of Tunis which was scratched from Rogers' schedule because of the demonstrations.

Students Shout

Blocked off by the police and soldiers were 2,000 to 3,000 Tunisian students who shouted at Americans, "Nixon kills Arabs," "Nixon assassin" and "Rogers go home."

There were a few isolated clashes last night and today between government forces

and students, but there were very few casualties—a bloody head, a few broken bones, some rocks thrown at a television crew, and some hoarse student voices.

According to a group of students whose first question to an American newsman was "are you a member of the CIA?"—the demonstration was discussed beforehand with the government. The students said that last night a representative of the Destourian Socialist Party, Tunisia's only authorized political party, suggested that the students, instead of demonstrating, should send a delegation to meet with Rogers.

The student leaders, whose organization is a member of the party, said they rejected that as ineffectual. "The students wanted to protest United States policy in the Middle East more violently than with a motion," said one student organizer.

At a press conference with newsmen accompanying Rogers on his 10-nation tour of Africa, Ladgham was asked about the students' assertions. Ladgham replied that "students, like everybody else, have the right to express their feelings and voice their opinions, but this must be done within the limits of courtesy and hospitality . . . what we do not condone are anti-American slogans and anti-American shouting."

Denies Provocation

Ladgham said one must not assume that the students were representative of all Tunisian opinion. At one point he called the incidents "regrettable" but he said some elements had tried "to exploit certain feelings which exist and which are cooped up by the Tunisian people." There is, unfortunately, said Ladgham "anti-American feeling" developing in many countries recently.

The prime minister denied that he himself had provoked demonstrations by a speech Sunday in which he said that those working for "peace, justice, and the dignity of man"

are affronted by arms aid to Israel.

While Tunisia and Morocco, which Rogers visited earlier this week, have no sympathy with Egyptian President Nasser's brand of Arab policy, they support the Palestine Liberation Front's version of a Middle East peace settlement, which they urged on Rogers today. The logical solution, said the Tunisian prime minister, was "to integrate these fighting cousins (Israelis and Arab Palestinians) under a state entity which might assume various shapes."

Ladgham said "this would be the equivalent of a wedding with both parties bringing in their own kind of endowment." But it might take "one generation or two" to achieve this kind of solution.

To add to the American injury today, some of the demonstrating students attended the University of Tunis's new Faculty of Law, built with American aid. The United States has provided Tunisia with \$626 million in aid since 1957.

Rogers and Tunisian Foreign Minister Habib Bourguiba Jr. traveled today by helicopter to Oued Tassa, where 97 American Army engineers are replacing railroad bridges wiped out in disastrous floods last fall. Rogers announced that the United States was providing an additional \$2.9 million in flood relief for a total of over \$4 million so far.

Rogers had been scheduled to talk and take tea today with professors and students of the university. The reasons for the schedule change were obvious enough but the official explanation for cancellation was a second meeting with Bourguiba.

Rogers' day started with a visit to the U.S. embassy during which eight American Peace Corps workers wearing black armbands to protest U.S. policy in Vietnam turned their backs as Rogers spoke. American officials said the eight could not speak for the almost 90 corps members here.